**Fireball Rear Commodore Australia Report**

The report by John Heywood, President of Fireball Australia summaries well the current position of Fireball sailing down under. Numbers are steady in South Australia but are falling in the other states. Sailing as a whole is suffering a bit, as is sport in general with people having so many other commitments and distractions.

Yachting Australia for a number of years has had a policy of supporting Olympic feeder classes only. This is driven by their funding which comes from the Olympic team budget. While we can see their dilemma it is frustrating that the top sailors from non-Olympic classes miss out on coaching while also rans who buy the right type of boat get it all.

Fireball Australia has committed to put up a fight and are willing to use some of their surplus funds to help promote the class. They are aiming to set up a “Team Fireball” squad starting with a few Optimists. The plan is to make the chosen sailors part of a Fireball squad, offering them coaching, subsidized entry fees, cheap sails and sailing kit. In exchange they will have to wear the “Team Fireball” kit at events and have stickers on their boats. The aim is to make Fireball appear cool in front of all the kids and have them wanting to be associated with Fireballs. Longer term we hope this will encourage them to buy Fireballs.

Unfortunately no-one from Australia will make it to Slovenia. It became too expensive to buy or lease a boat in the UK, send it across and sail. We will have a container going to Thailand with about 8 boats. The feeling of the fleet was that a fresh venue would have sparked more interest, particularly from those who have been to Pattaya for the past worlds.

Over the next few years Fireball Australia will have to fight hard to keep the states other than South Australia alive. NSW, Victoria and Western Australia are just holding together small fleets with their sailors all in their 50’s to 60’s. We will do our best to keep the fleet going in these states by offering support and financial aid.

**Ben Schulz**